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RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2307
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4738
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000602

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
DCHA/AA FOR MIKE HESS
AFR/AA FOR KATE ALMQUIST AND FRANKLIN MOORE
AFR/SA FOR ELOKEN, LDOBBINS, JKOLE
DCHA/OFDA FOR KLUU, ACONVERY, TDENYSENKO, LTHOMAS
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PRM FOR BFITZGERALD, MMCKELVEY, MLANGE
USUN FOR FSHANKS, ZKHALILZAD, RHAGEN, JDELAURENTIS
GENEVA/RMA FOR NKYLOH, KPERKINS

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TAGS: [EAID PHUM PREF PGOV PREL ASEC KDEM ZI](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR WANTS TO PLAY A ROLE WITH IDPS WHILE RUWA
CAMP CONTINUES TO SIMMER

REF: A. HARARE 598
[1](#)B. HARARE 593
[1](#)C. HARARE 555
[1](#)D. HARARE 553

Classified By: Charge d'affaires Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Charge and poloff met with UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Resident Coordinator Marcellin Hepie on July 8 to discuss the ongoing IDP situation and how the U.S. Embassy had responded to the plight of over 300 IDPs that sought assistance on July 3 (Reftel A). Hepie indicated that UNHCR wanted to play a larger role, but was constrained by the Zimbabwean Government's (GOZ) ongoing resistance to any international intervention in the crisis. He appeared optimistic that the GOZ-sanctioned camp at Ruwa where 380 IDPs are housed could be dismantled soon, as UNHCR was working to provide safe means for the IDPs to return home. Meanwhile, an armed standoff developed at Ruwa after IDPs stripped a pistol from a plainclothes officer interrogating the IDPs in their dormitory. Police armed with AK-47s surrounded the men, who refused to surrender the pistol for several hours. On hearing of the incident in a meeting with international donors, a Ministry of Social Welfare official reportedly said he was calling the riot police. Answers to the IDP issue remain elusive, as the Ruwa camp continues to

demonstrate the GOZ's hostility towards IDPs. END SUMMARY.

We "planned for an explosion and got an implosion"

¶2. (C) On July 8, Charge and poloff met with UNHCR Resident Coordinator Marcellin Hepie at his request to discuss IDPs and how the U.S. Embassy had managed to assist 300 IDPs on July 3 and 4. Hepie, who only arrived in Harare a month ago, expressed interest in playing a larger role in the response to the IDP crisis, even if that meant operating undercover. He explained that UNHCR's IDP mandate is on a case-by-case basis and that is activated by the high commissioner. In such cases, UNHCR should be responsible for camp management, protection, and non-food items (NFIs). Hepie indicated he shared an "ambitious" proposal for UNHCR action to provide NFIs and protection services (not specified) with his headquarters in Pretoria on July 7 and that they were already asking questions about it. He offered to share it with us at a later date.

¶3. (C) On the subject of the 380 IDPs at Ruwa, Hepie indicated that representatives from International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, and World Food Program (WFP) would begin field assessments to determine if their preferred destinations were safe yet. The GOZ has said that everyone should be out by about July 15. Hepie did not think that was realistic, given that the Ruwa IDPs come from many parts of the country and conducting the field

HARARE 00000602 002 OF 002

assessments will take time. He indicated that after the raid on July 5, eight people were missing (NOTE: One appeared at the U.S. Embassy seeking assistance on July 7 and has been referred to a safe house in Harare. END NOTE). Hepie hoped that if the field assessments and the return process was successful, it could open a window to other means to help the IDPs. Charge expressed skepticism that the GOZ could be trusted to play such an integral role in the safety of the IDPs. Hepie agreed, but indicated (without any real hope) that the only other means to provide security would be peace keepers, and that perhaps a solution involving SADC countries could be found.

Meanwhile, CIO threatens IDPs with a gun in Ruwa

¶4. (SBU) On the afternoon of July 8, poloff received a call from IDPs at Ruwa requesting assistance with an armed standoff that had developed just after lunch time. The Ruwa camp was established with IDPs that had previously sought shelter at the South African and German embassies (Reftels C and D). According to the IDPs and information from IOM, a man the IDPs believed to be an intelligence officer went to the men's dormitory and began interrogating the men, focusing on their appointed chairman. He asked questions, refused to identify himself, and at one point brandished a pistol and attempted to shoot the chairman. The pistol jammed, and the IDPs overpowered him, seizing the weapon, his national ID card, and documents that they said indicated he was gathering intelligence on the IDPs. One man was injured in the skirmish and was taken to the hospital. The intelligence officer then fled, and the IDPs -- now possessing a gun and its magazine -- were surrounded by six policemen armed with rifles. A Ministry of Social Welfare official learned of the standoff while in a meeting with international donors, who dissuaded him from calling the riot police. Eventually, UN staff arrived and the IDPs returned the pistol. However, they all slept outside as they did not feel safe in their dormitory.

COMMENT

15. (C) Solutions to the IDP issue remain beyond the grasp of the international community, and the GOZ continues to demonstrate its disregard for the IDPs' safety as evidenced by the armed standoff in Ruwa. UNHCR in Zimbabwe is impotent to provide a meaningful response in the immediate future, and we question how effective they will be if they have to work through the GOZ. Hepie took notes as we described the IDPs that approach the U.S. Embassy by the dozen and the poor and insecure conditions in the safe houses in Harare. We hope that his proposal to UNHCR will lead to more medium- and long-term solutions, as well as improved UN leadership (Reftel B). Nonetheless, the short-term situation remains critical. END COMMENT.

Dhanani